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TAGS: PREL PINS OSCE GG RU BE

SUBJECT: A/S FRIED'S OCTOBER 20, 2006 MEETING WITH BELGIAN FM DE GUCHT

Classified By: Ambassador Tom C. Korolgos, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: EUR A/S Fried met Belgian FM and OSCE CiO De Gucht in Brussels on October 20. Fried and De Gucht agreed that the U.S., EU, and OSCE needed to press Russia on treatment of ethnic Georgians in Russia. De Gucht repeatedly stressed the importance of having the Secretary attend the December 4-5 OSCE Ministerial if the

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OSCE was to put effective pressure on Russia. Her presence would lend greater credibility to any OSCE message about recent Russian actions in Georgia and elsewhere. The Minister claimed also that elements were in place to secure deferral of action on the Kazakh bid to assume the CiO office in 2009; De Gucht will visit Astana early in November to seal the deal. On Transnistria, De Gucht disagreed with arguments about the utility of concentrating on re-establishment of the peacekeeping force, arguing that it was more important to get all parties to agree to talks on the status issue. He endorsed the suggestion of a Belgian-hosted brainstorming session on Moldova. End summary.

OSCE Ministerial

¶2. (C) In the context of a discussion about A/S Fried's just concluded trip to Georgia, De Gucht expressed full agreement on the need for the OSCE to deliver a forceful statement denouncing recent Russian actions toward Georgia and Georgians at the conclusion of the December 4-5 Ministerial in Brussels. De Gucht emphasized he was prepared to "run risks" to promote a successful conference, especially since a successful meeting "meant being prepared for an unsuccessful one."

¶3. (C) Achieving a successful meeting would be much easier, De Gucht maintained, if Secretary Rice were on hand when the Ministerial was drafting its communique. De Gucht was adamant that having the Secretary on hand was critical. Given new and increased Russian recriminations against Georgia and other actions throughout the Caucuses, her presence would lend weight and credibility. Her absence would prompt the Russians and others to draw the "appropriate" conclusions about U.S. views of the OSCE's importance. A/S Fried said he would raise the Minister's concerns directly with the Secretary but did not promise anything (noting difficulties in the Secretary's schedule) and adding that OSCE statements and actions were already of great utility. De Gucht responded that he would write to the Secretary shortly in his capacity as CiO to urge her to attend the meeting.

Kazakh Assumption of CiO Post in 2009

¶4. (C) The Belgians believed the elements were in place to resolve the continuing difficulty surrounding the Kazakh bid to become CiO in 2009. The Kazakhs appeared ready to take several useful steps, including agreement to a deferral of any vote on their candidacy for 2009, and the issuance of a statement announcing new democratization measures. Following a long session on October 19 in Brussels with the Kazakh parliamentary speaker, De Gucht said he planned to visit Astana early in November to resolve any final details. He expected the anticipated Kazakh actions to take place shortly before the ministerial. The Kazakhs realized they were the leading candidate for 2011, "but didn't like it." That said, it seemed they would not cause problems, assuming nothing occurred to cause them a major loss of face.

Transnistria

¶5. (C) Responding to A/S Fried's demarche, De Gucht said he disagreed with the U.S. on the need now to concentrate on the peacekeeping force for Transnistria. The Belgians thought it more useful now to push all parties to say they were open to talks on final status; without Russian approval or acquiescence, this would probably prove impossible. He hoped further that the Secretary would press Moldovans and Russians to be more flexible. Referring to one of A/S Fried's suggestions, De Gucht said he favored the idea of a Belgian-sponsored brainstorming session on Moldova.

¶6. (U) This cable has been cleared by A/S Fried. Imbrie

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